



I T A L Y

*Statement by the Viceminister for
Foreign Affairs and Minister
Delegate for Development
Cooperation
of Italy*

The Honorable Patrizia Sentinelli

*To the High-Level Meeting on the Mid-Term
Comprehensive Global Review of the
Implementation of the Programme of Action for
the Least Developed Countries*

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STATEMENT BY THE HON. PATRIZIA SENTINELLI
VICE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF ITALY
IN CHARGE OF DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Madame President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with real pleasure that I am participating in this "High-level Meeting on the Mid-term review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010," in my capacity as Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs in charge of Development Cooperation.

I have only been in office for a few months. By appointing me the new government has indicated its strong interest in development cooperation, recognizing the fundamental role of development cooperation in foreign policy. This appointment was welcomed by all the organizations which focus on peace and solidarity.

The change of pace in Italian development cooperation policies makes this meeting today particularly meaningful and useful for me personally.

For me it is a honour and a responsibility to hear and to learn from the main stakeholders of this meeting, the Least Developed Countries, regarding how the more developed countries can cooperate with you in the spirit of achieving goals of common interest and contributing to economic growth and poverty reduction.

Development cooperation is a reciprocal exchange of what each country may have to offer -- whether it be experience or financial-human resources -- in order to identify together a way forward that will involve all countries, and that is able to protect the things we all share. Cooperation should take place among equals, and efforts should be made to eliminate the persistent distinction between donor countries and beneficiaries, by fostering territorial partnerships.

During this Mid-term review, we are assessing progress in implementing the Programme of Action over the past five years and envisioning corrective actions for the years to come. In this context, permit me to stress two fundamental points.

Development is a long-lasting process that can only be achieved if women can participate fully into it and obstacles to their participation are removed. The gender dimension should therefore be considered in all our discussions and deliberations.

Secondly, we should not forget the unique contribution of local institutions, NGOs, and civil society in shaping our cooperation. Governments can also greatly benefit from the active participation of local partners in the formulation of national economic and social policies.

The fight against poverty and the achievement of financial and social prosperity are fundamental to building peace, which will continue to be a utopian dream unless the basic conditions for decent living are established: food, housing, education, and health for all.

We should be able to reconcile politics and economics, and not let the latter prevail over the former. Let us treat this Mid-term review not as a deadline to be met but as an occasion to re-think, if necessary, our priorities, goals, and beliefs.

The framework for our action should be improved governance, to ensure that national and international efforts to reduce poverty and pave the way to lasting and balanced development are not hampered by bad practices.

In Italy we have traditionally paid special attention to the Least Developed Countries in allocating development assistance. We intend to maintain our commitment to our common partnership for development and are encouraged by the sense of ownership expressed by our partners, the LDCs. We will follow this policy, in our bilateral and multilateral cooperation. This forum can provide us with guidance on how to better focus our actions over the next five years.

The goals to be reached were set out in the seven commitments of the Brussels Programme. The target of earmarking 0.15-0.20 per cent of the Gross National Income (GNI) of donor countries for ODA to LDCs was reiterated at the World Summit of September 2005. While we may have to revise our strategies and some of our priorities, we must make a real effort to come closer to these agreed objectives.

At the outset of the 61st session of the General Assembly, the countries represented at this Meeting have the chance to send a signal of unity and willingness to work together, a signal that can set the tone for the intense work that the Assembly has to undertake in the coming days and months.

It is my sincere wish that we not waste this occasion. I feel confident that most of the countries here fully share the same wish.

Thank you for your attention.